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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

July 29, 1943

FILE INFORMATIONAL MEMORANDUM NO. 9

To: Persons Concerned with Manpower Problems in Food Industries
From: Raymond A. Ioanes, Acting Chief, Food Industries Labor Branch
Subject: Buffalo Labor Referral Hiring Plan

On June 14 in Buffalo, New York, the War Manpower Commission inaugurated a plan to direct the flow of male labor to those essential war industries in most urgent need of such labor. Buffalo, New York, was selected as the site for this "labor referral hiring plan" because Buffalo was the tightest labor area in the United States.

Under this plan no employer can hire male workers unless they are referred to him by the United States Employment Service. A system of labor priorities is used to determine which employers should be permitted to hire. A Labor Priorities Committee in Washington, D. C., composed of representatives of the Army, the Navy, and the War Production Board, determines the standards on which priorities 1 through 4 are assigned to industries, and also determines the national need for the products or services of the various industries. A local Labor Priorities Committee in Buffalo applies these standards and meets weekly to consider petitions of industries for priority ratings, and to review ratings previously assigned in the light of current changes in the supply and demand for workers. This Buffalo Priorities Committee has five members: Ed Barcolo, Chairman representing the Public; Paul Smith, Area Director of the War Production Board; Major John Hoover, Army; Lieutenant Charles Klein, Navy; Leroy Peterson, Area Director of the War Manpower Commission.

When this plan was first inaugurated, food industries were not considered for labor priorities. As a result, those industries which required male workers soon were seriously short-handed. This was brought to the attention of the Food Industries Labor Branch by Mr. Edward Chase of G. L. F. Mills and Mr. William R. Morris of General Mills who called our office for assistance.

A meeting of liaison representatives of various commodity branches was held June 30 to consider the application of this labor referral hiring plan to the food industry. Changes in the standards for labor priorities were suggested at this meeting. Commodity branches also prepared lists of companies in the Buffalo area in which they were interested, and suggested priority ratings for these industries. This information was approved by the Washington Labor Priorities Committee and sent to Buffalo.

On July 14 representatives of the Food Industries Labor Branch went to Buffalo to confer with representatives of the food industries and members of the Labor Priorities Committee. It was learned that the suggestions the commodity branches had made had already been used by the Buffalo

Labor Priorities Committee in considering the labor needs of the food and food industries, and that feed and flour mills, cold storage warehouses, vegetable oil processors and some insecticide manufacturers had been granted a No. 1 labor priority. Some other petitions (including meat packers) were being considered at that time. Dairy industries had not yet cooperated well enough among themselves to present a unified picture of their manpower needs. Milk distribution had been declared "locally needed", however, and progress was being made.

Canning operations were currently at a lull and there was no immediate need for workers. When the bean and tomato packs start about August 1, the Buffalo Labor Priorities Committee will give careful attention to the manpower needs of the canners.

Generally the labor referral experiment seemed to be working out satisfactorily. The first week the plan was in operation 1600 men were referred by the United States Employment Service office. There has been a gradual decrease in this number as men become placed in jobs employing their highest skills. For the week ending July 9 only 400 requested referral.

It appears that the most urgent labor needs of the food industries in Buffalo, New York are have already, or shortly, will be satisfied. It would have been impossible for us to meet this problem without the prompt and wholehearted cooperation extended by the various branches. We wish to commend the liaison representatives for their part in assuring the processing, storage, and distribution of vitally needed foods in the Buffalo area.

Raymond A. Loane